

Preparation
FOR
DEATH.
BEING

A Letter sent to a Young Gentlewoman in *France*, in a dangerous Distemper, of which She died.

By WILLIAM WAKE. M. A.

The Third Edition.

Numb. xxiii. 10.

*Let me die the death of the righteous,
and let my latter end be like his.*

L O N D O N,
Printed for Richard Chistwell, at the
Rose and Crown, in St. Paul's Church-
Yard, 1688.



Advertisement.

Could either my desires, or
endeavours have prevailed
for the Suppressing of the follow-
ing *Letter*, it had been buried in
the same Grave with Her to whom
it was address'd. But being fal-
len into the Hands of her Relati-
ons after her Death, many Copies
were dispersed before my return
into *England*, and thereby a ne-
cessity put upon me either to pub-
lish it my self, or to have the dis-
satisfaction of seeing others do it
for me.

This being the true account of
the *Edition* of this short Treatise, I

shall need the less Apology, if there seem nothing in it for which it should be exposed to a publick view. It was writ as a private Letter, to a person of more Piety, than Curiosity; and without any prospect; nay, I may add more, upon an assurance that it should never come to any ones sight but her own. And therefore it ought not to be wonder'd if it appear with all the plainness and freedom, which an *Epistolary* Stile and Character required. For the rest, as I can sincerely profess that it was no principle of vanity that led me first to write it so much less does any sitch Motive induce me now to publish it. It was to serve a greater and better end, I both then did, and now



Advertisement.

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do design it: And if those who shall hereafter peruse it, do it but with the same Piety that she did for whom it was composed, I am perswaded neither they nor I shall have any cause to repent us of our Labour.

A F

Paris,

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on design it: And it thos who
shall becomer gentile is do it but
with the time of the bid
I am I am I am I am
I am I am I am I am
I am I am I am I am



2009

1862

Paris, April 25. S.N. 1684.

Madam,

THE Address I here make you, how meanly soever. I have performed it, is yet so suitable to your circumstances, and so well besits my Character, that I make no doubt but you will accept it with the same charity that I have designed it. And therefore instead of making Apologies for my undertaking, I will rather send it to you with my hearty Prayers, That those few directions I have here put together, may be as truly useful to you, as I do assure you they were really by me intended for your service.

You are not, Madam, to expect in this short draught any thing but what

you have often already heard, and, I persuade my self, have long practised. Religion is none of those things that change with the fashion, and accommodate themselves to the mode : And though we have of late met with some who have endeavoured upon the foundations of Christianity to erect a new Scheme of Court-Divinity, by making the way to Heaven both broader and smoother than it is : yet both the projectors and those that follow them will sadly find themselves mistaken in the end ; when the one shall perish for betraying their Master, and the others be condemn'd for not rejecting their Innovations.

But, Madam, if you find nothing new in the matter, I am sure much less will you have any thing in the Style and Method, but what is plain and easie.

In

In such Discourses as these, he seems to speak most properly, that expresses himself most clearly. Some things indeed I should have added; others have changed, and have dress'd the whole with greater care: but I had little time, and much other business, which I am sure you know to be more than pretence. The Rules yet I am confident are sound and useful, and may as they are, serve your devotion; But if your abundance of better helps frustrate that design, yet at least you will be pleased to esteem it an undoubted testimony of that sincerity with which I am,

Madam,

Your most humble,

and most obedient

Servant,

W. W.

IN:

INTRODUCTION.

TH E R E is nothing hath proved more fatal to that due *Preparation* we ought to make for *another life*, than our unhappy mistake of the nature of *this*. We are brought into the World, Children, ignorant and impotent; we grow up in vanity and folly; and when we come to be Men, we are but very little more prudent and more considerate. The whole of our *Reflections* seems to terminate in this, what course we are to take to pass our time; some to get, others to spend their Estates: and when Interest or Inclination, Friends or Fortune have determined the choice, we are then entred in, and our remaining business is to pursue this end to the best advantage, for our present ease and our future establishment. Thus are our thoughts and our desires wholly tied to this World; we vainly project a settlement in it, nor look we any farther than the little Interests and Employments thereof engage us.

2. I AM sure, *Madam*, I need not say much to convince you, who have had so many opportunities to settle this *Reflection* upon your own Experience, and who, I
am

am perswaded, have so profitably employ'd them, that this is the just character of the far greater part of Mankind: And for the unhappy influence of it to the *Decay of Christianity*, I think it is not to be doubted that 'tis the tying of our affections so much to this World, that above any thing indisposes us to think of another. Whilest we set up our Hopes and our Establishment here, we either altogether forget, or at least do not so vigorously consider, That God has provided another and better place for us, whither we shall in a very little time be transferred by him, and for which therefore the great affair of our whole lives now should be to provide.

3. IS IT possible to be imagined that we should see such numbers engage their Lives and Labours, some to heap together a little dirt that shall bury them in the end; Others to gain an *Honour*, that at best can be celebrated but by an inconsiderable part of the World, and is envied and calumniated by more than 'tis truly given: Most to pursue the pleasures (as they call them) of their Natures; which begin in sin, are carried on with Danger, and end in bitterness; and scarce one that troubles himself about the Blessings of *Heaven*, or at least lives as if he did so. Would Men seriously perswade themselves that they have here *no abiding place, no City to dwell in*: but are only in their

their passage to the heavenly *Jerusalem*, their *City which is above*, where alone true happiness is to be found, and upon which therefore their thoughts and their endeavours ought chiefly to be employed.

4. CAN we behold the Vices and Debaucheries of many; the carelessness and irreligion of almost all; and believe that the *Christian World* is seriously convinced of those great truths their Religion teaches them of *A future life*, and *A vast Eternity* of Rewards and Punishments, according as we observe or neglect the Duties it commands in *This*?

5. HOW shall we believe that those Men are perswaded of the true business of this Life, That 'tis the time of tryal, That God has thrown us into this World as into a Circle, to exercise our selves in it, and receive the *Crown*, if we come off with Victory, who so shamefully decline the *Combat*; and are so far from obtaining the Victory, that we are scarcely to be brought but even to do any thing towards it?

6. IN a Word; were it possible that the thoughts of *Eternity*, but especially the near approaches of it, by a mature age, a crasy constitution, or a violent sickness, should amaze so many as we find it does, make them so unwilling to go to Christ, and receive the *Reward of their Labours*; had they ever truly considered all these things; and not rather with old *Simeon* sing their *Nunc dimittis*,

Introduction.

FF

tis, with comfort and assurance; Luk 2. 29.
and cry out with St. Paul, Phil.

1. 21. *To me to live is Christ,*
and to dye is gain; and again, Phil. 1. 21,
v. 23. *I have a desire to depart,* 23.
and to be with Christ.

7. **W**ERE I now, *Madam*, to deal with any other than your self, these and the like Considerations would engage me, before I entred on the following prescriptions, to dispose your mind to a reception of them, by shewing you the great interest we have in *Eternity*; That our Lives are uncertain, to be sure cannot be long here, and that therefore we ought to hasten all we can, before it be too late, to examine our Souls, and provide for futurity. That all the little Objects we now pursue, for which our Ease, our Conscience, nay, our very Religion it self is sacrificed by us, are but vanities and trifles, neither worthy in themselves, nor satisfying in their enjoyment. But, *Madam*, your vertue, and your prudence, make all such preparations unnecessary formalities, and instead of opening the way to the following *Address* by such insinuations, I ought rather to Apologize for my indiscretion in the whole undertaking, which your piety prevents, and which your daily practice shews you already to understand beyond any thing I am able to offer for your assistance.

3. NE;

8. NEVERTHELESS since it has pleased God to an excellent natural disposition to add yet other Obligations, and by the troubles of this Life to draw you to himself; to shew you worthy of his favour, and I trust more highly to reward you in the next; be pleased to give me leave this way to congratulate with you those Evils, which so many are wont to lament, and which no one more sincerely wishes (if it please God) to see you free from, than my self; and as you have done me the honour to command my attendance whilst you were with us here, pardon me if I intrude upon your meditations a few of my most serious *Reflections*, to supply my absence; and be a testimony of that real respect wherewith I honour you now in your Retirement.



C H A P. I.

Of Contentedness under your Condition.

THo' I am infinitely distant from that excellent perfection which made the *Primitive Christians* glory in their tribulations, and *St. Paul* rejoyce in that *sting in the flesh* which God had given him as a peculiar Blessing from above; yet is it really some satisfaction to me, that I am not now wholly liable to that Censure, which is so usually made on these occasions, *That 'tis easie for any Man when he is well, to give advice to them that are not.* It hath pleased God, for the rashness perhaps of my usual discourse, to make it at present very uneasie for me to speak at all. I cannot but acknowledge his Mercy in the Admonition, and if it please him altogether to silence me, so, That I shall not only, as now, speak with difficulty, but wholly be disabled to open my mouth, to any articulate utterance; yet I hope he will give me grace even in my *thoughts* to praise him; To consider the justice of his proceeding with me, and to implore his pardon of what my sins have worthily deserved.

2. IT cannot be deni'd, but that this is an exercise of the most difficult Nature, and the Apostle himself confesses even where he most exhorts us to an acqui-

Heb. 12. v. *escence in it, That no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous:* Yet Considerations there

are that are able to alleviate our greatest miseries, and make us, if not come up to the character of those who *rejoyce in Tribulations*, yet at least satisfy the duty I am now recommending, of being *patient and contented* under our *Sufferings*.

3. AND the first of these both in our practice and this Discourse ought to be, *To look up to that Hand that inflicts them.*

It is our great unhappiness when any calamities fall upon us, that we are uneasy and dissatisfied; and our whole business and project is, how to remove them, not to consider from whence they come. Sometimes indeed, if the cause be visible, we discourse of it as of a *chance* or a *misfortune*, but we stop at the instrument, and never pass on to him that directed it; the second cause we know, but trouble our selves no further to recur to the first: whereas, would we seriously consider, * *That the Providence of God orders all the affairs of the World,* * *That without his assistance we can no more get quit of our Affliction, than but by his permission we first fell into it;* † *That this uneasiness* there-

therefore is a murmuring against his justice, a rebellion against his Providence, upon whom alone we ought to rely; and whose mercy we should by all imaginable submission implore; We should then acquiesce in his dispensation, till it pleased his goodness to remove our evils; cry out with old Eli,
It is the Lord, let him do what 1 Sam. 3. 18.
seemeth him good: and as we daily pray that his will may be done in Earth, so by our submission shew that we truly desire it.

4. LET us to this add, Secondly; That God delights not to afflict; nor ever willingly grieves the Children of Men.

* IT may be we suffer in our calamity the punishment of our sins, and then let us not murmur at that which is the just reward of our deservings. * Perhaps God proves us in this life, that he may the more plenteously reward us in the next; and how then shall we repine against his mercy, which makes these light afflictions that are but for a moment, work out 2 Cor. 4. 17.
 for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; To be sure if we make that use of them which he intends, if we repent seriously, submit contentedly, and serve him faithfully, they shall turn to our advantage: tho' the passage be troublesome, yet is it secure, and shall in a little
 B. time.

time bring us ease and quiet, and peace at the last.

5. FOR let us not mistake the goodness of God, nor imagine that because he smites us, therefore we are forsaken by him, but let us consider rather,

Thirdly; *'That 'tis the very Condition of all
"his promises, through much Tribulation to
"bring us to his Kingdom;*

*'That blessed place where all evils shall be
'removed and there shall be no
Revel. 21.4. 'more any death, nor sorrow, nor
'crying, nor pain. We have a full
account of this, Heb. 12. a place so satis-
factory, that I will transcribe only one pas-
sage, to engage you to recur your self to
the rest; My Son despise not thou
Ps. 5, 6. the chastening of the Lord, nor
faint when thou art rebuked of him;
for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and
scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth. But,
Fourthly;*

6. *"Let us look into the Ages that have gone
"before us;*

LET us consult our own experience in the present; we shall find the observation of our *Apostle* ever to have been verified, That the best men generally fall under the severest

severest pressures ; Our Saviour *Christ* was our forerunner in this tryal, as well as in the reward that accompanies it : He began as we ought to follow after, and for the joy which was set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame. Heb. 12. 24.

Which of his holy Apostles escaped this tryal ? What numbers of the Primitive Saints were under the perpetual persecution of the most malicious Enemies that Hell could raise against them, for many hundred Years ? ' They were stoned ; they were ' sawn asunder, were slain with the ' Sword, they wandered up and Heb. 11. 37. ' down in Sheeps skins and Goats ' skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented ; and ' yet were these the Men, of ' whom the World was not worthy, ——— 38. whom we ought with comfort to look up unto, and run Heb. 12. 1. with patience the race that is set before us.

7. THESE Considerations, though I have (as I ought) proposed in general terms, yet I am sure, *Madam*, you will not fail by a particular application to bring them home to your own concerns ; and for your easier performance I will go on, if you please, to make yet a reflection or two that may fortifie you in it.

8. I N-enquiring into the goods that you have lost, or the evils you either fear or suffer ;

suffer; I shall not trouble you with an Enumeration of that which I know you despise, the *flatteries*, the *courtship*, the other *vanities* of the World; The very loss of these is a happiness almost equal to what you undergo for it. And though that Beauty, which yet others, I perswade my self, valued too more highly than your self, was a Blessing which you owed much to Heaven for; yet the additional ornaments you have hereby the opportunity of making to your Soul, will in the end give you a more solid satisfaction, and as much chain to you the affections of the good and wise, as the other attracted the eyes of the rest.

9. For your present distemper; it is, God be thanked, neither so troublesome for the present, as to take you off from all satisfaction; nor, I am willing to perswade my self, shall it prove so dangerous in its consequence, as to deprive you of all hope of seeing your self again in your former health, only disciplined and instructed, not utterly cut off by sickness.

10. **HOWEVER**, let us suppose now, as well as fear the worst; Is there any thing particular in dying young? Do not thousands every day do it? And have you known none in health and vigour, who have pitied your condition, and bet old they are themselves gone before you, even since you fell into this Distemper: And what is the harm then

then of this ? that you have fairer warning than others, who are unexpectedly cut off, and so have a better opportunity, as well as greater engagements, to cultivate your Soul, and provide for your latter end ? To dye is no pain, to leave this World is only to get quit of a troublesome place, where you could never find any ease or quiet, any solid satisfaction and comfort. To go to Heaven is to be transferr'd to that Kingdom you have ever long'd for ; to enjoy all the glories of eternity, to become company for Saints and Angels, and behold the Blessed presence of God, *in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

II. THE truth is, the greatest part of your misfortune is founded on the opinion of the World : we fools esteem these things evils, and this makes others believe they really are so. But the good Christian who considers them only as necessary passages to *glorious immortality* ; that through this dark Scene of fancied horror sees a *Crown* and a *Throne*, and *everlasting blessings* prepared for him ; joyfully receives his Summons as he has long impatiently expected it : goes off out of the World as contentedly as the *Actor* when the Play is ended leaves the *Stage*. His only concern is, whilst he appears upon it, so to demean himself, that he may have a *Plaudite* at last ; and then 'tis all one whether

ther his part ended in the *Third Act*, or continues on to the very last *Scene*.

12. *S u c h, Madam*, are your Obligations to this first Duty, and the performance of them will especially engage you to these three things ;

1. *Never despair either of God's blessings here, or of his reward hereafter ;* but go on as you have begun ; fulfil your duty as he has commanded ; embrace his promises with Faith and assurance ; and for the rest, leave it in his hands, as in the hands of a most merciful Saviour, who himself became Man, and suffer'd Death upon the Cross for our sakes, and by that stupendious act of Mercy, has taught us ever to rely in all things upon his Goodness.

2. *Murmur not at your sickness*, for thereby you will sin against God's Providence and Government ; but submit with Peace to what you suffer, and pray for your deliverance. I do not say you should affect a rude insensibility : Sighs and Groans and mournful expressions, these are the sick Man's

proper language ; David roared for
Psal. 38. 8. *the disquietness of his Soul ;* our blessed Lord himself in his last and sharpest pang of sorrow, *cry'd out with a loud voice*, before he gave up the ghost. There is nothing in

this but what is innocent ; and though too much of it may betray your weakness, yet
 whilst

whilst you keep still a resignation to God's disposal, it cannot be imputed to you for any sin.

3. TAKE heed of that, which is the general fault of sick persons, and which a long disorder almost unavoidably brings with it, and that is *Peevishness*. This will but render you uneasy to your self, and to those about you; it troubles your repose, without doing you any good; and is equally to be avoided both for the folly, and for the sin.

13. I SHALL close this reflection with one necessary Remark, which I desire you to apply to all the following; That in speaking thus to you, I am so far from charging you as guilty in this matter, that I can sincerely say, I believe the exhortation wholly needless; only it was my duty in so important a concern to omit nothing that might any way be thought necessary: and it will be your satisfaction to see how far you are advanced in your duty; and your engagement to pursue that very little, which you may perhaps find to be still wanting.

C H A P. II.

That you ought not to be amazed at the Fear of Death.

THERE is nothing in the world more generally dreaded, and yet less to be feared than *Death*. Indeed for those unhappy Men, whose hopes terminate in this life, no wonder if the prospect of another seems terrible and amazing. Hell is a place which the most resolute Soul cannot but tremble to think of, how much more to enter into? But for him who has lived well, and who therefore relies on God's mercies for an *eternal Salvation*, to shew this concern, it betrays either much weakness or great doubt, and either his faith, or his hopes, or both, are less firm than they ought to be.

‘*HIM therefore that will not fear to dye,
must first be careful to live well.*

2. **THE** stroak of Death is nothing; Children endure it, and the greatest Cowards find it no pain: But when to this, we shall add the certain apprehension of its being the gate to an *eternal life*, then may we presume to say, we have wholly conquer'd this *King of terrors*, and sing the *Epinikion* of St. Paul,
1 Cor.

1 Cor. 15. O death where is thy sting ! O Grave, where is thy Victory ! — v. 55.
Thanks be to God who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. — v. 57.

Secondly ; He must take off his affections from this world.

3. It was the reflection of the Son of Sirach, Eccles 4. 1. O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a Man that liveth at rest in his possessions, to the Man that hath nothing to vex him, but hath prosperity in all things ! Whilst we please our selves with the vanities we enjoy here, we cannot expect but that it must needs be a trouble to us to be divorced from them : But let us only change the Scene ; instead of these earthly, transient goods, let us raise our Souls to the Heavenly and Eternal : then shall we begin to think the time long, that we are detained from them, and wish for that end, we before feared. Tully tells us, that Cleombrotus was so taken with this speculation, That having only read in Plato the conjectures of that great Man concerning the state of the Soul after death, he had not patience to tarry the tedious course of nature, but by a violent death cut the thread himself, that he might immediately enjoy what he so infinitely desired.

4. N O R may we fortifie our selves much less against the fear of death, *Thirdly,*

“From the Consideration of *those Evils it*
“frees us from, than of that happiness
“it transfers us to.

When the Great Emperour of *Persia* wept over his Army upon this Consideration, That within the revolution of a single Age, not a Man of all that innumerable confluence would be left alive; *Artabanus* standing by, improved his meditation; by adding, That yet all of them should meet with so many and great evils, that every one should wish himself dead long before that. It is the true character of our lives which *Job* *Job 14. 1.* once gave; *Man that is born of a Woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of trouble.* It is the great blessing of Heaven that as our lives are very miserable, so are they very short too, and what we usually complain of as our misfortune, we ought rather to congratulate as our happiness. Had *David* died a little sooner, How much trouble had he escaped which now he endured, in the rebellion and death of his own Son, and all the miseries of a Civil War that was raised against him? Let any Man consult his own experience, and say, how many sorrows he had miss'd, had God called him to his rest but a few years before;

fore ; and therefore whether the promise he has made to *deliver the just from the evils to come*, ought not to be made our daily prayer for its accomplishment, rather than fill our Souls with terror at the apprehension ?

But *Fourthly* : ' *Death do's not only free us from misery, but sin too.*

5. THE life of a Christian is a continual warfare, full of dangerous conflicts and doubtful consequences : Our lusts solicit us, the World encourages, the Devil tempts us ; we fall often, and are never secure. But *Death* frees us from all danger, sets us safely on Shore in our long-expected *Canaan*, where there are no temptations, no dangers, no possibility of falling ; but eternal purity, and immortal joys secure our happiness for evermore.

T H E R E is yet an advice which may usefully be added here, and it is this,

' *That since the time of our dying is uncertain,*
' *we should every day expect what every hour*
' *may bring to us :*

It is our great unhappiness in this matter, that though we live never so many years, we are still surprized. We *put the evil day far from us*, and then it catches us at unawares, and we tremble at the prospect.

But let us stand on our guard, let us live like those who expect to dye, and then we shall find these terrors very much lessen, and that we fear'd Death only because we were unacquainted with it. *Philip King of Macedon* had a Page constantly attending in his Chamber to tell him every morning as soon as he awaked, 'Remember, O King, that thou art mortal.

7. But to quit you wholly of this fear, and that I may close this point too with something particular, give me leave, *Madam*, to desire you instead of a thousand arguments, to recur only to your own experience; you have already lookt death in the face, you are acquainted with it, what have you found so terrible in it as to disturb the repose of a good Christian, i. e. of such a one as your self? I cannot without satisfaction remember the calm, the quiet, the peace you were then in; when every hour seem'd to tell you 'twas your last. *Death* is an enemy you have already met, and already conquer'd, you have pull'd out his sting, by the Preparation you have made for it, and you know he has nothing now remaining that can injure or affright you. Only maintain your conquest, by securing your innocence, and working out your Salvation; and then you may with confidence undervalue that which so much terrifies the World, and which yet all, even those who the most dread it, must in a little time meet whether they will or no.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

That you ought to be careful to provide for another World.

THIS is the great duty of our lives, and ought to be the chief business of us all every day of them. No Man knows what the next hour may bring forth, and to put our Salvation, and the hopes of eternity to so dangerous a hazard as we do, when we procrastinate (though never so little) our *working of it out with fear and trembling*, is to shew either a very unwarrantable presumption upon God's goodness, or a very light esteem of our own Souls.

2. OUR lives depend on so many curious parts and Organs, so many diseases assail them every moment, so many accidents may take them from us, that we can never say the next minute is our own; and that he therefore who neglects his Salvation to day, may without danger put it off to to morrows consideration. God has told us that his Spirit shall not alway strive with Man, but as he offers to every one a space to *repent*, so there is a time too (if we omit that opportunity) when there *shall be no longer any space for it*.

AND how can any of us tell that this hour is not the last wherein God will give us

his grace for so great a work ; so that though we should live to see the next, yet that then our Sentence shall not be found already pronounced, and we shall not be able to repent, though we never so much desire it.

3. **SUCH** obligations therefore have we all immediately to *consider our ways,*
 Psal. 119. *and turn our feet to God's testima-*
 59. *nies :* But, *Madam*, it has pleased his great Goodness to lay more than ordinary ties upon you, to do this : He has taken you off, by a peculiar instance of his Mercy, from the Vanities and Temptations of the World : He has disabled you from falling into many sins : and calls upon you to watch against the rest ; he has brought you to an early knowledge of your self, and of him, at an age when most others are the Servants of sin, and creatures of Vanity. He has given you opportunity from the writings and conversation of the best Men, to understand your duty, your danger, and your interest : And, *Madam*, what you ought above all things to bless him for, he has given you a heart too, to receive instruction, and that is desirous of his glory ; and though after so many better means as you have had of informing your self how to proceed in this important business ; after the knowledge you have attain'd, and the progress you have made, there is little need for me to add any thing on this subject : yet I know I cannot

not better satisfy your piety, or discharge my own duty, than by laying before you, in a short view, a prospect of your labours, through which you have so long been travelling, and are now so nearly come, to everlasting life.

4. At the first Creation, when God created Man upon the Earth, he planted in him a Law teaching him his *whole Duty*, he gave him besides, a *positive Law*, not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge; and to perform this, he added a perfect strength and ability whereby he might for ever have lived without the least sin; had Adam done this, his perfection (the Knowledge and Ability God created in him) had still continued, and after a certain Period of years, which God should have determined, he had been rewarded with an assumption to eternal felicity.

5. This is that which is usually called THE FIRST COVENANT, which Adam fatally breaking by his disobedience, soon forfeited; and came short of that Glory which God had prepared for him: yet it pleased the Lord to enter into a SECOND with him, the tenour of which was, That the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's head: i. e. That Christ taking our nature upon him, and so becoming the seed of the Woman, should perform that Covenant of unfinishing obedience which

Gen. 22.
17.

Gen. 34.
15.

which *Adam* broke, and yet being faultless, undergo a shameful, and ignominious death for him and his Posterity; and so *bruise the Serpent's head*; i. e. deliver us from the power of the Devil, who by this transgression had got the dominion over us.

6. AND this is that *Covenant* we now live under, the *Promises* of which are * pardon of sins through the Blood of Christ; * strength and grace to perform the conditions, * and eternal glory to reward our labours; This is what *God* on his part has declared to us; For the requisites on ours, what we must do to obtain these blessings, that is the great business of us all to know, and the peculiar design of this place briefly to consider.

7. WHERE, first, I must lay down this for your encouragement, that we are no longer now tied to the heavy yoke of a perfect, unsinning Obedience; not to have committed any *deliberate* sin, nay, or even to have persisted in a *habit* and *course* of it; but it is * a sincere endeavour to perform whatsoever God enables us; * an unfeigned Obedience to the whole Gospel of Christ: and * a hearty bewailing of our own infirmities, as often as we come short of it, with * a real desire, and * true endeavour of doing better for the future.

8. To enter on a minute consideration of this would engage me to lay before you a

Summary

Summary of the whole Gospel of Christ: But, *Madam*, this were to exceed the limits of my design, and you have abundant assistances for this Knowledge, in those excellent Books which you have chosen for the Companions of your Travels. Only because certain it is that the very best of us come short of our duty, and stand in need of God's pardon, and forgiveness; I will briefly lay before you the *method* you are to take to obtain this, in the particular consideration of those two great duties of *Faith* and *Repentance*.

S E C T. I.

Of Faith.

THERE is scarce any duty which has been so obscured in the writings of learned Men as this. I will not enter here into any of their disputes, but briefly say, what I think fit for your practice and performance of it.

2. **FAITH** then is an *assenting to, or believing* * the whole word of God, but especially of his Gospel, and of the * Commands and * Threats and * Promises therein contained. This is the nature of that *Faith* which is required of us, and it is then perfect when it affords to every one of these that assent which is proportioned to it, viz. 1. A firm assent to whatever the Gospel has revealed: 2. an obediential submissi-

on to the Commands : 3. An humble fear and awe of the Threats : and 4. a fiducial reliance on the Promises of it.

3. To have the first of these you must in general firmly believe, That whatever God hath said, is infallibly true ; and though in particular, there be many revelations which you cannot, it may be, understand the possibility of ; as, That *God became Man, was born of a Mother still remaining a Virgin ; That he suffered and died, and yet lives for ever ; yet* must you undoubtedly conclude, That since he has plainly told you these things are so, you ought firmly to believe him, seem they never so repugnant otherwise to your apprehension.

4. To have the *Second*, you must in general assent to God's Commands, that they are most fitting, just, and righteous ; and that all men therefore ought diligently to fulfil them ; and in particular you must resolve that by the assistance of Heaven you your self will.

5. For the *Third* you must believe steadfastly that these *Threats* shall certainly, as most justly they ought, be executed upon all those impenitent Sinners against whom they are denounced, and that except you take care to work out your Reconciliation, and get out of the number of these unhappy creatures, you shall certainly find your part in them.

6. For the last you are infallibly to believe what God has promised; especially that he will give pardon of sin, and everlasting Salvation to all humble and repenting sinners; and for what refers to your own particular, you are confidently to rely upon his word, that if you perform your part, Christ will never fail in his; and that therefore you ought to fulfill those duties, which he commands, and to which alone this Promise of Reward is given.

7. It is a question which my little experience lets me know do's oftentimes trouble very good Men, That certainly their Faith in this last instance is not right, because they still find it accompanied with Fears and Doubts of their own Salvation. But, Madam, you must consider that the Faith which God requires in this matter is only this, That he will certainly reward all those that believe in him, and obey his Commandments; This we are undoubtedly to assent to; but now for the particular application of this Faith to our selves, that deserves no more of our assent, nor can indeed warrantably have it, than what is founded on the serious consideration of our own performances. Now though our Conscience bearing witness to our sincerity, may give us great cause to hope we are in a State of Salvation; yet is it no part of any Man's Faith undoubtedly to believe it: Nay, rather some degree of fear and trembling.

bling mixt with it may be a good means to secure us in our duty ; whilst a confident dependance is very often ill grounded, and may create such a negligence as will certainly ruine us.

8. LET your endeavour therefore be to fulfil God's commands, to repent as often as you fail of it, and to hope for pardon and acceptance of him. Infinite reason you have for all this ; and this will be sufficient for your present comfort, and for your future acceptance. But if still, either *the greatness of the danger, or *glory of the reward ; *either your desires of becoming better, *or a true and humble sense of your own unworthiness (which is almost the perpetual case of the best persons) keep your Soul under an awe and a concern, and will not suffer you to rise up to that *confidence*, which some Men, I fear , unwarrantably themselves pretend to, I am sure unwarrantably require of others ; Assure your self, that whilst you firmly acquiesce in the general belief, *That God will reward all them that love him, and doubt of your self* only because you fear whether you do this so well as you ought ; this *doubting* shall prepare you to receive the reward of your *Humility* , but never bring you in danger of any punishment for your *infidelity*.

S E C T. II.

Of Repentance.

REPENTANCE is usually defined to be a *change of mind, an absolute entire conversion of our Souls from sin to God.* It is not a thing to be done at certain times, as when we give an *Alms*, we exercise a particular *Act of charity*; but 'tis a *state of life*, and consists in a continual sincere practice of all those duties which God has required, and a hearty sorrow, confession, and resolution of better obedience, as often as we violate any of his Commands.

2. THE passage to it is difficult and uneasy; It contains many steps which the habitual sinner will find it hard to overpass. I shall here consider only *four* of the more principal, and which are ever found in that Christian who truly lives in a *State* of it.

3. THE *first* is, *To have a true sense of sin, of its Odiousness, and of its danger.*

i. e. You must firmly be convinced that every sin you commit, sets you at enmity with Heaven, and will (if not forsaken) render you incapable of it: That to persevere in any evil course, is the way to make you unhappy in this Life, and shall certainly

ly throw you into everlasting torments in the next : Of all this you must seriously persuade your self, and that not lightly and in general, deceiving your own Soul ; but bringing it home to your particular concern in it ; affecting your mind, and engaging your utmost endeavours to avoid that evil, which is thus odious to God, and thus dangerous to your Everlasting Salvation.

TH E *second* step to this Duty, is, *To have a hearty sorrow and contrition for your sin.*

4. **A**N D this you must endeavour after, not by being *frighted and terrified*, and so upon that account *troubled*, as often as you reflect on those infinite evils your sins are like to bring upon you. There is no Man living so wicked, but would do the same ; But, *Man*, you must really sorrow that you have ever sinn'd ; That you have provoked so loving and merciful a Father ; That you have disobey'd so gracious a Redeemer, and all to gratifie your passions in some baser instance, which you ought to abhor upon these grounds alone, though there were no punishment awaiting your transgressions.

5. **N**OR must this *sorrow and contrition* be only for the grosser evils of our unregenerate estate, but even when we live best we must repeat it as often as we transgress the divine Command ; nay, we should employ it too,
even

even upon the *weaknesses*, the *frailties*, the *pollutions* of our Natures : our very *proneity* and *inclination to sin* : for however these (unconsented to) are no actual transgressions ; yet are they matter of sorrow and grief to every true Christian, and therefore ought to be part of his *humiliation* also.

THE *third* Preparatory to this Duty, is,
Confession:

6. AND this so necessary to our pardon, that we have no promise of any forgiveness without it : To fulfil this you must not satisfy your self to acknowledge to God Almighty in *general*, That you are a Sinner ; but you must carefully remark, and particularly enumerate also, at least the several *kinds* of sin whereof you know your self guilty : You must shew your sense of them by *aggravating* them with all the unhappy circumstances, and heightning accidents of them ; and for the rest, you must comprise your unknown and lesser sins under some such general confession as that of the holy David, *Who can tell how oft he offendeth ? O cleanse thou me from my secret faults.* Psal. 19:
12.

7. You will, *Madam*, doubtless expect that I should here add somewhat of another sort of *Confession*, which I have sometimes had the honour to discourse with you about ; I
then

then told you that unless some Accident rendered it so, I did not esteem it *absolutely necessary*. The expediency of it, I must confess, I ever much approved, and have often wish'd others would do so too; and the reasons I have at large given you, may be summed up into these: 1. That St. James has advised us to *confess* our *fautes* one to another, Chap. 5. 16. *and pray one for another*. 2. If we have injured another, then we ought to go and *confess* our fault to him, as ever we mean to obtain the forgiveness of God. 3. But if our sin belongs only to him, yet to *confess* to his Minister is in some sort a fuller satisfaction to his justice; It declares our greater detestation of that offence, for which we are content to commit this violence upon our selves. It gives us this comfort too, that thereby we get the opinion of our *Spiritual Guide* concerning the *state* of our *Repentance*; and his direction and assistance for the perfecting of it; and if we desire his particular absolution, we must then make our Confession to him, before we can obtain it. What force these Motives may have upon you, I cannot tell; but for the present you are passing into a place where you will have little opportunity to practise it, and should therefore resolve to supply it, by a more due and careful performance of it to God Almighty.

THE last thing Preparatory to a true Repen-
tance, is, *A firm resolution and vow of a new*
life.

8. THAT you will immediately quit all
your Sins, and all the *occasions* that are wont
to lead you into those sins; That you will
wholly resign your self up to the guidance
of *Christ*; and perform whatsoever you know
to be his *Will*; and this do truly and sincerely
all the days of your life.

9. AND here, *Madam*, behold in short the
duties that are required of you: This is
what you must do to inherit *eternal Life*;
And if you have (as I make no doubt) al-
ready come up thus far, you are then firmly
to persevere in it unto the end; If you ful-
fil this *Resolution*, though you * fall some-
times by *infirmity*; * are betrayed by *Ignorance*,
* or surprized by some *sudden*, and
daily incurring temptations; * Nay, though you
should be so unhappy as to fall into some
greater *Act*, even of *deliberate sin*, which you
might have avoided, and which you present-
ly retract by Confession and amendment, you
are nevertheless in a *regenerate estate*, you live
the Life of a Christian here, and shall inherit
the reward that is promised to him, in a
glorious Immortality hereafter.

10. I SHALL close this with my earnest
desires, which not any doubts of your good-
ness, but my real concern for your welfare,

extort from me; that you will seriously consider your own state as to this affair; Flatter not your self, * neither a *transient sorrow* that you have sinned, * nor a *wish* that you had not, * neither a faint and general, *God be merciful to me a sin*; * nor an *imperfect resolution* not to be so any longer; * not an observing for the rest the *whole Law*, if you indulge your self but in any one *habit* of sin; * not praying to God to give you his *grace*, without your own sincere endeavours of using it; nothing but a steady *resolution* brought to practice; God's grace used, his Commandments obey'd as far as your infirmities will permit, and his pardon begg'd where you have not; This is that which alone must save your Soul, and carry you on to that glorious Immortality, which I beseech him to give you for his Son *Jesus Christ's sake*.

C H A P. IV.

A Consideration of some particular Duties which I would more especially recommend to you.

I THOUGHT, *Madam*, here to have ended your trouble, and to have refer'd my self for what may concern your farther practice, to those excellent and useful *Treatises* you have so wisely provided for that purpose; But they speak in *general*, and though I know the care you take to apply them to your self,

yet

yet I cannot but beg leave to add two or three Considerations that may more immediately be accommodated to your particular circumstances.

First, That you duely implore the blessings of Heaven by your constant *Prayers*, to God *Almighty*.

I NEED not tell you that you have *many wants to be supplied, *many blessings to receive, *many sins to be forgiven, and that there is nothing can obtain all these for you, but your *Prayers*; or were you so All-sufficient as not to need the influences of Providence to support you; yet would sure, every day bring to your remembrance slips and infirmities to be confess'd to him; to be sure, blessings and mercies to be gratefully acknowledged, in a perpetual return of *praises* and *thanksgivings* to the great Donor. Upon all which accounts there can never be any pretence for your neglect of that duty, which so many continual engagements oblige you to.

2. *Let* me to this, add the great assistance it will afford you in the performance of all the rest of your duty; whilst thus you have your *conversation in Heaven*, all the little goods here below will seem poor and inconsiderable in your sight; this will strengthen your *patience* in bearing

bearing your Calamities, whilst with faith You contemplate the glorious end to which they lead ; It will raise in your Soul the greatest care of fulfilling the divine Will , lest you lose so excellent a reward ; In a word ; this exercise will call down the favour of Heaven upon you, either to remove those afflictions you now labour under, from you, or you from them ; will bring you peace, and comfort, and satisfaction in this life, and an everlasting peace and repose in the next.

3. It has been the great discouragement of some Christians in the exercise of this duty, that they do not find these great *Benefits* of their Devotion : That they are told indeed of the mighty influences of Prayer : and have read how that by it *Joshua* changed the order of nature, and made the Sun

stand still in the midst of the Firmament ; Elias tied up the *Windows of*

Josh. 10.

22.

1 Kings

17.

2 Kings

26.

Heaven that it rained not for three whole years in Israel ; Hezekias added fifteen years to his life ; The Apostles gave feet to the Lame, Eyes to the Blind ; and even life to the Dead ;

But themselves are so far from working such *miracles*, that they cannot so much as obtain the supply of those ordinary wants they very often labour under.

4. But, *Madam*, we must not for all this think either that the Arm of the Lord is shortned, that he cannot, or his will alter'd that

that he should not hear us, as well as he did them ; indeed for such miraculous effects, we have now no longer need of them, and it would therefore be a fond presumption in us to expect them. But for the rest there are two considerations which Men would do well to reflect on before they charge God foolishly ;

1. WHETHER we do not very often receive the benefit of our Prayers, when yet ungratefully we charge Heaven with denying our Petitions ?

2. IF our Requests are really deny'd, whether the fault do's not lye at our own doors that they are so?

5. FOR the former of these we may very easily be mistaken, and I doubt very often are so : Did we indeed perfectly know the state of our own condition, and what was most proper and convenient for us, we might then have some reason to conclude, our Prayers were not heard, if our desires were not answered : But now that such is our ignorance, that though we are sensible enough of the evils that lie upon us, yet we cannot say either whether they are fit to be removed at all ; or when, or by what means ; or for what state ; we ought to be very wary in our thoughts of God's Providence, and not rashly pronounce what we can never be sure of.

6. SHOULD you now, for instance, your self, *Madam*, pray to God for a *Recovery*

very from this sickness ; how rash would it be to accuse God of not hearing your Prayers, because you found your Disease to continue still? *It may be he sees it has not yet perfectly wrought in you all those good effects he intends ; That if you should at this time recover your health, it might occasion your return to the sins and follies of your age. *It may be he intends yet longer to prove your Vertue, that so he may afterwards more plenteously reward it ; *Perhaps he punishes your sins by it in this Life, that he may spare you in the next. Now if these or the like are the causes of your affliction, certainly you could not have a greater injury done you, than the removing of your Distemper : and those Prayers you make for a recovery are to be lookt upon as best heard by God, and best answer'd for you, if they move him to a longer continuance of your sickness. Again, *Though God does not answer your requests in the very removal of your Distemper ; it may be yet he shews their efficacy in supporting you with strength and patience to bear it ; Infinite are the methods of his Providence, and impossible it is for us to trace them all : and though we are not able to point out the very mercy which our devotion has obtained, yet this God has promised, and we must therefore firmly believe and rely upon it, *That if we ask, we shall, we do, receive.*

7. But here my other consideration must come in, St. James, speaking of the ineffectualness of some mens Devotion, tells them, *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss*; and that I fear is too James 4.3. often our condition; And therefore that you may be able both to know and avoid this, I will beg leave, *Madam*, to give you only a short Catalogue of what qualifications seem to me more immediately requisite to render your Devotion prevalent.

1. TAKE heed that the things you desire be such as are fit for God to give, and you to receive; Let not any instances of *sin* defile your Requests; and even in the most innocent matters, rather beg in general the blessings of God which he knows requisite, whether for your Soul or Body, than descend too much to the particulars your self, and prescribe to him, who so little understand your own wants.

Secondly, BEFORE you *pray*, clear your Soul from all those sins which you know displeasing to God Almighty; for till that be done, he regards you as his Enemy; and you cannot therefore expect that he should reward you as his Servant.

Thirdly, PREPARE your Soul with all those necessary *Graces* that are more immediately requisite to this performance: with *Humility* and *Resignation*; with *Faith* in his Power, and *Hope* of his Mercy; with *Love* and *Charity*.

Charity towards God and towards your Neighbour; All which will infinitely dispose him to give, and prepare you to receive.

Fourthly, **WHEN** you pray, let it be with *attention*, with *feruency*, with *perseverance*; To which end I should think it better that your Prayers were *short* and *frequent*, than over long; which only make them tedious and uneasie to you in your present state, but never the more acceptable to God; who delights not in mens words, but requires their hearts; and hears the shortest *Ejaculation*, as certainly as the longest Prayer.

Fifthly, **IN** a word: Having pray'd, leave the issue contentedly in his hands: Let it satisfie you that you have his promise for your security, and that if thus you make your requests to him, you shall
 1 Cor. 15. 58. sooner or later most certainly find that *your labour has not been in vain, in the Lord.*

A SECOND Duty, that I must more particularly recommend to you, is *Charity*:

A GRACE that has more Promises annex't to it than any other Moral or Theological Virtue; *St. Paul* prefers it even to *Faith* it self, 1 Cor. 13. And could we have every other Virtue which the Gospel enjoyns in the highest perfection, yet he plainly assures

us

us that without this, they would all avail us nothing.

2. CHARITY taken in its largest extent is nothing else but, *The sincere Love of God and our Neighbour*: The former of these requires not only your highest esteem of him, your desires of going to him, and filling your self with his goodness; but also a sincere endeavour to please and obey him, to fulfil his commands, and hate all those things that he dislikes, and may any way set you at enmity with him.

3. THE latter engages you to an universal love of all Men, even your very Enemies; to retain no malice nor hatred against any; to be ready to do them all the kindness you are able, by reproofing the Vicious, instructing the ignorant, relieving the poor; for all which, you have the peculiar promise of God for your engagement; and shall receive the pardon of your sins, and everlasting glory for your Reward.

I Must now hasten to a conclusion, and therefore will presume to add only this one caution more,

THIRDLY, That you would take an especial care *how you employ your time.*

It is not, *Madam*, for me to divine what opportunities you may have for this, nor can I therefore advise you any thing in particular:

E

Only

Only let me beg you to lose no occasion of doing all the good you can ; which whatever the issue of your present sickness be, is to be sure your duty, and shall prove your blessing either in this World or another.

2. I NEED not desire you to spend the hours you may have for your friends and your diversion innocently ; but if I may presume to speak my thoughts in a matter of no great importance, I should perswade you not only to do this, but even to deny your self somewhat of that full liberty which others do usually allow themselves ; the Wise man has told us, that *Mirth is not proper in the time of sorrow* ; since it has pleased God to lay his afflictions upon you, You ought so far (I had almost said in civility to him) to comply with your circumstances, as to be a little more reserved than otherwise were needful, and though not to fly to the other extreme (which, I rather ought to dissuade you from) yet to keep in such a temper, as may both speak you sensible, as you ought, of your condition, and yet not discontented at God's dispensations.

3. But, *Madam*, whatever your employs be, let no day pass without some time to retire into your self, and either by reading, meditating, or some other pious exercise to feed your zeal, and confirm your devotion.

4. LASTLY, in your most busie Occupations, when you are never so much taken up with

with other affairs, yet steal now and then a minute to the *thoughts of Heaven*, send up an *Ejaculation* to the God of your Salvation; This is a piece of thrift that by frequent exercise will do you much good, and yet never injure any other business. *Augustus Caesar* is highly commended by the ancient Poet, that in the midst of his most troublesome occupations he could still find time to look up to Heaven, and consider the frame, and contemplate the parts and motions of it. How much more should we always be at leisure to reflect on him that framed both that and us; to whose *Providence we owe* every minute of our lives, and whom therefore we ought, above all other things, incessantly to praise for his unspeakable Mercies.

C L O S E.

AND now, *Madam*, that I may close with what I begun, after so long an intrusion upon your Meditations, with these reflections, which I am confident make a great part of your daily entertainment; The only thing that can render either these Papers or their recommendations acceptable unto you; that can secure you against sin, and endear Vertue and Religion to your practice, will be to raise your affections above this World, by seriously considering the excellence and certainty of another life; and how vain and transient, indeed how troublesome and unsatisfying are the highest felicities of this.

2. I HAVE not here time to delineate to you the glories of God's heavenly Kingdom, nor indeed could I tell you (if I had) what the happiness of that place is likely to be, *where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain*; When our Bodies shall be freed from every disease; our Souls from every trouble; those shall be chang'd into incorruptible and immortal substances, these be entertain'd with the most comfortable and ravishing

visiting objects, and both continue to be thus unspeakably happy throughout all Eternity, without the least danger of either losing or lessening their enjoyments.

3. *BLESSED God!* How contrary is this to our melancholy and uncomfortable portion here below? a place, where not a day passes, but we eat our Bread with sorrow and cares; The present troubles us, the future amazes us; and even the past fills us with grief and anguish. I forbear to mention the particular evils which every Man best knows by his own experience: If we look abroad upon the present face of the World, What do we see in the several Kingdoms about us, but Wars and confusion, all things running to ruine, and destruction, to the confounding and devouring of each other. If we consider the *Church*, that holy Mother of us all, how do her unnatural Children rend and tear her sacred bowels by their contentions? What *Schisms*, What *Heresies*, what *Profaneness* is there in it? Only in Sin and Impiety we agree on all sides; here there is neither Jew nor Gentile; but all are united in a monstrous confederacy against God and our own Souls.

4. If we contract our view, and confine it to our own sinful Nation; It has pleased God to preserve us yet in peace, to see if we will repent and anticipate his Judgments; But alas! his hand is lifted up to strike, and we do nothing to prevent the blow: and

what can we expect but that it should at last fall upon us to our confusion?

5. PARDON me, *Madam*, if I freely confess to you my fears, that I tremble to think what shall be the issue of so great an Impenitence, as we have now these many years shew'd under all the various methods of God's Providence to reclaim us.

6. HE has sent the sword, both of civil Troubles and publick War amongst us, and it has been deeply stain'd in the blood of the best and chiefest of our strength; Our *Princes have been forced into Captivity; Our Church been chased into the Wilderness; the breath of our Nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord has been cut off by the vilest of his Subjects, yet have we not return'd, nor sought our God.*

7. THE Fire has consumed our dwellings, the Plague destroy'd its *Thousands and ten Thousands in our Streets*, yet behold we are still incorrigible, we go on as before in the ways of our own hearts, and speak peace to our Souls even in the midst of all these dangers.

8. GREAT certainly is our sin, and fatal, I fear, shall be the punishment of it, and what shall we do, (for, *Madam*, I must here beg leave to joyn my self in this reflection) to prevent our part in the common destruction? Let us take heed that we have no share in their sins, and then by God's mercy we shall have none in the punishment. Let us live

as those who attend such trials, and then he will either be pleased to take us from the evil to come, or cover us with his hand in the midst of it: He will to be sure, with the danger, make a way for us to escape; and being past through this short storm, will bring us to that Port where we shall find everlasting Rest, and a consummated felicity; 'Those blessings, which neither Eye has seen, nor Ear heard, nor does it enter into the Heart of Man to conceive; but which God has prepared for them that love him: Among which blessed number that you may then be found, as it was the only intention of these reflections to prepare you, so shall it ever be the hearty Prayer of him who with all imaginable respect and sincerity remains,

Madam,

Your most humble,

and most obedient

Servant,

W. W.

T H E



C O N T E N T S.

I. I N T R O D U C T I O N to Pag. 13.

That the fatal source of all our evil is, That our affections are tied to this World, and we do not, as we ought, consider another.

* 2. The Letter it self divided into four Chapters.

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Yet which we are engaged to,

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- 3. And by our Afflictions shews that we are his. n. 5.*
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* *The Close.* p. 50.

F I N I S.

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